

CLAIMS

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1. An information collection defining a body of law stored on a computer readable medium, the information collection comprising parts of the body of law that are
5 stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of the respective part of the body of law, the collection including a plurality of parts of the body of law that are different versions of each other and have different temporal information associated therewith.

2. An information collection defining a body of law stored on a computer
10 readable medium comprising parts of the body of law that are stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of the respective part of the body of law, and a plurality of topics each having associated therewith at least one part of the body of law and including information relating to the at least one part of the body of law, at least one of the topics having associated therewith a plurality of parts
15 of the body of law that are different versions of each other and have different temporal information associated therewith..

3. An information collection stored on a computer readable medium comprising unique units of information defining a body of law, each information unit including a part of the body of law and being stored in association with temporal
20 information indicating the applicability with respect to time of the part of the body of law included in the respective information unit, the information collection including a plurality of information units that include different versions of the same part of the body of law and have different temporal information associated therewith.

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4. An information collection stored on a computer readable medium comprising unique units of information defining a body of law, each information unit including a part of the body of law, a plurality of topical units each stored in association with at least one information unit and including information relating to the at least one information unit associated therewith, each information unit being stored in association with temporal information that indicates the applicability with respect to time of the part of the body of law included in that information unit, at least one topical unit having associated therewith a plurality of information units that each include different versions of the same part of the body of law and have different temporal information associated therewith.

5. An information collection according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the information collection is structured so that a part of the body of law can be accessed based at least on the temporal information associated therewith.

6. An information unit according to claim 3 or 4, wherein the information collection is structured so that an information unit can be accessed based at least on the temporal information associated therewith.

7. An information collection according to claim 4, wherein the information collection is structured so that an information unit can be accessed based at least on the temporal information associated therewith, directly or through a topical unit with which that information unit is associated.

8. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein each information unit includes the associated temporal information.

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9. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein each information unit and its associated temporal information are linked.

10. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein each information unit comprises a structured document including a part of the body of law and its associated temporal information.

11. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein the information collection comprises a relational database including records, and each information unit and its associated temporal information are included in a respective record.

12. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein the information collection comprises a plurality of files, each file storing at least one information unit and its associated temporal information.

13. An information collection according to claim 4, wherein the information collection comprise a plurality of files, each file storing at least one topical unit and each information unit associated therewith and its associated temporal information.

14. An information collection according to claim 4, wherein the information collection comprise a plurality of files, each file storing at least one topical unit and each information unit associated therewith and its associated temporal information.

15. An information collection according to claim 3, wherein the information collection comprises topical units, each topical unit being stored in association with at least one information unit and including information relating to the at least one information unit associated therewith, the information collection being structured so that an information unit can be accessed via its associated topical unit.

16. An information collection according to claim 4 or 15, comprising a hierarchical arrangement of topical units and associated information units.

17. An information collection according to claim 4 or 15, wherein information associated with a topical unit includes temporal information relating to the applicability with respect to time of at least one of the information units associated with the respective topical unit.

18. An information collection according to claim 4 or 15, wherein the information collection is hierarchically organized as a topic tree having leaf nodes representing atomic topical units, and wherein each information unit associated with a respective topical unit is associated with the leaf node representing that topical unit.

19. An information collection according to claim 4 or 15, comprising at least one table of contents (TOC) associated with the atomic topical units, each TOC including a reference to each information unit associated with the respective atomic topical unit.

20. A information collection according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the temporal information includes a date range.

21. An information collection according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the temporal information includes a date range, and wherein the information collection is structured so that a part of the body of law can be accessed based at least on a date encompassed by the date range associated with that part of the body of law.

22. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein the temporal information includes a date range, and wherein the information collection is structured so

that an information unit can be accessed based at least on a date encompassed by the date range associated with that information unit.

23. An information collection according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the temporal information comprises a date range including a date on which the related part of the body of law is effective, and if that part of the body of law has a date of termination, the date range includes the date of termination.

24. An information collection according to claim 1 or 2, wherein at least one part of the body of law has associated therewith a date on which that part of body of law included was adopted.

25. An information collection according to claim 3 or 4, wherein at least one information unit has associated therewith a date on which the part of body of law included in the information unit was adopted.

26. An information collection according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the body of law includes at least one title of the United States Code.

27. An information collection according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the body of law includes at least one title of the United States Code of Federal Regulations.

28. An information collection according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the body of law includes at least one title of a codified set of laws of at least one state.

29. An information collection comprising structured documents defining a body of law stored on a computer readable medium, the information collection comprising atomic parts of the body of law that are stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of a respective atomic part of

the body of law, a plurality of atomic parts of the body of law being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith, and each atomic part of the body of law and its associated temporal information being included in the same structured document.

5 30. An information collection comprising structured documents defining a body of law stored on a computer readable medium, the information collection comprising atomic parts of the body of law that are stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of a respective atomic part of the body of law, each atomic part of the body of law and its associated temporal
10 information being included in a separate lower level structured document, and at least one higher level structured documents including information relating to at least one lower level structured documents that is in a hierarchical relationship with a higher level document, a plurality of atomic parts of the body of law being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith, at least one higher
15 level document having information relating to a plurality of lower level documents that each includes a different version of the same atomic part of the body of law and the associated temporal information.

 31. An information collection comprising structured documents defining a common subject stored on a computer readable medium, the information collection
20 comprising atomic parts of the common subject that are stored in association with temporal information indicating a state or status with respect to time of a respective atomic part of the common subject, each atomic part of the common subject and its associated temporal information being included in a separate lower level structured

document, and at least one higher level structured document including information relating to at least one lower level structured document that is in a hierarchical relationship with a higher level document, a plurality of atomic parts being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith, at least one higher level document having information relating to a plurality of lower level documents that each includes a different version of the same atomic part of the common subject and the associated temporal information.

32. An information collection according to claim 30 or 31, wherein at least one higher level document includes a table of contents (TOC) including a reference to each lower level document associated therewith.

33. An information collection according to claim 32, comprising at least one higher level document including a TOC having a reference to at least one other higher level document hierarchically related to the at least one higher level document in an ancestral/descendant relationship.

34. An information collection according to claim 32, comprising at least one higher level document including a TOC having a reference to at least one other higher level document and to each lower level document referenced by the at least one other higher level document, the at least one higher level document being hierarchically related in an ancestral/descendant relationship with the at least one other higher level document, and each of the lower level documents.

35. An information collection according to claim 30 or 31, comprising at least one structured document indicating differences between different versions of the same atomic part.

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36. An information collection defining a body of law stored on a computer readable medium, comprising:

unique atomic parts of the body of law each stored in association with a date range indicating the temporal applicability of that part of the body of law; and

5 a table of contents (TOC) having a plurality of headings each of which identifies one or more atomic parts of the body of law that are associated therewith, at least one heading being associated with a plurality of atomic parts that are different versions of each other and have different date ranges associated therewith, and each atomic part of the body of law being associated with at least one heading.

10 37. An information collection according to claim 36, wherein the headings have temporal information associated therewith that indicate the temporal applicability of each atomic part of the body of law associated therewith.

38. An information collection according to claim 36, wherein the information collection provides access to an atomic part of the body of law in response to a request
15 including at least a date encompassed by the date range associated with that part.

39. An information collection according to claim 36, wherein each atomic part of the body of law and its associated date range are included in a structured document.

40. An information collection according to claim 39, wherein each TOC is included in a structured document having a reference to each other structured document
20 having an atomic part of the body of law referenced in a heading of that TOC.

41. A system for storing and accessing parts of a body of law having

associated therewith temporal information indicating the applicability thereof with respect to time, the system comprising:

an information collection stored on a computer readable medium comprising parts of the body of law that are stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of the respective part of the body of law, a plurality of parts of the body of law being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith; and

means for accessing a part of the body of law from the information collection.

42. A system according to claim 41, comprising means for displaying information accessed from the information collection.

43. A system according to claim 41, wherein the temporal information associated with a respective part of the body of law includes a date range, and the means for accessing accesses a part of the body of law in response to at least one request including at least a date encompassed by the date range associated with that part of the body of law.

44. A system according to claim 43, wherein:

the temporal information associated with a respective part of the body of law includes a date range, the date range including a date on which the associated part of the body of law is effective, and if the associated part of the body of law has a date of termination, the date range includes the date of termination; and

the means for accessing accesses a part of the body of law in response to at least one request including at least a date encompassed by the date range associated with that part of the body of law.

45. A system according to claim 42, wherein at least one part of the body of law has associated therewith a date on which that part of the body of law was adopted.

46. An information storage and retrieval system, comprising:

a computer system including a computer display device, a computer input device and a computer-readable medium, the computer system being coupled to access data stored on the computer-readable medium;

the medium storing uniquely identifiable parts of a body of law in association with temporal information indicating the applicability of the respective part with respect to time, a plurality of the parts being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith;

the computer system being programmed to display on the computer display device, in response to input from the computer input device, the identity of at least two parts of the body of law that are different versions of each other together with temporal information associated therewith, and to display that part whose displayed identity is selected with the computer input device.

47. An information storage and retrieval system, comprising:

a computer system including a computer display device, a computer input device and a computer-readable medium, the computer system being coupled to access

data stored on the computer-readable medium;

the medium storing uniquely identifiable parts of a body of law and a table of contents (TOC) having headings which describe parts of the body of law, wherein each part is associated with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of the respective part, a plurality of parts being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith;

the computer being programmed to display on the computer display device headings and temporal information; and

the computer being programmed to display on the computer display device a part selected with the computer input device that has temporal information associated therewith that encompasses the displayed temporal information.

48. An information storage and retrieval system, comprising:

a computer system including a computer display device; and

the information collection of claim 1, 2, 30 or 31;

the computer system being programmed to display on the display device a part of the body of law having temporal information that encompasses a date forming at least part of a request input to the computer system.

49. An information storage and retrieval system, comprising:

a computer system including a computer display device;

the information collection of claim 3 or 4; and

the computer system being programmed to control visibility on the display

device of the units of the body of law based on whether temporal information associated with a respective unit encompasses a date forming at least part of a request input to the computer system.

50. A method of accessing an information collection stored on a computer readable medium using a computer coupled to access the information collection, the information collection comprising parts of the body of law that are stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of the respective part of the body of law, a plurality of parts of the body of law that being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith, the method comprising;

displaying on a computer display device coupled to the computer dates in association with information identifying at least two parts that are different versions of each other; and

displaying on the computer display device that part of the body of law that is selected with a computer input device coupled to the computer.

51. A method of accessing an information collection stored on a computer readable medium using a computer coupled to access the information collection, the information collection comprising parts of the body of law that are stored in association with temporal information indicating the applicability with respect to time of a respective part of the body of law, a plurality of parts of the body of law being different versions of each other and having different temporal information associated therewith, the method comprising;

inputting to the computer using a computer input device the identify of a part of the body of law and a date; and

in response thereto, the computer causing the computer display device to display that part whose identity was input to the computer and which has temporal
5 information encompassing the inputted date.

52. A method according to claim 50 or 51, wherein the information collection includes a table of contents (TOC) having headings with which one or more parts of the body of law are associated, each heading being associated with temporal information indicating the applicability of parts associated with the respective heading, the method
10 comprising:

displaying on the computer display device a heading and the temporal information associated therewith;

inputting to the computer using a computer input device a selection of displayed temporal information associated with a heading; and

15 in response thereto, displaying on the computer display device the part of the body of law in the displayed heading associated with the temporal information that is selected using the computer input device.

53. A method of providing the information collection of claim 2 or 4 comprising:

20 associating each information unit with applicable temporal information;
organizing the information units into topical units at least one of which

includes the plurality of information units having different versions of the same part of the body of law; and

5 configuring the information collection to provide, in response to at least one request identifying a topical unit and a date, an information unit of the identified topical unit having temporal information associated therewith that encompasses the date.

54. A method of providing the information collection of claim 30, comprising:

10 associating each part of the body of law with applicable temporal information;

including each part of the body of law and its associated temporal information into a lower level structured document;

associating applicable lower level structured documents with a higher level structured document;

including in each higher level document information relating to each lower level document associated therewith; and

15 configuring the information collection to provide, in response to at least one request identifying a part of the body of law and a date, a structured document including the identified part and temporal information associated therewith that encompasses the date.

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